

the **CAHPS**[®] connection

Issue 1 May 2004

The **CAHPS**[®] Connection is a new occasional newsletter for the many users of CAHPS products and survey results.* Its purpose is to help you stay informed about new CAHPS products, the product development work of the CAHPS Consortium, and various tools and resources that may be useful to you, such as workshops and educational materials.

The term CAHPS refers to a comprehensive and evolving family of surveys that ask consumers and patients to evaluate the interpersonal aspects of health care. CAHPS tools and resources are made possible by the public-private CAHPS Consortium, which includes the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the American Institutes for Research (AIR), Harvard Medical School, RAND, and Westat.

Please feel free to pass on this newsletter to anyone who may be interested in knowing more about what's happening with CAHPS. If you received this newsletter from a colleague and would like to be added to the mailing list, please contact the CAHPS Survey Users Network (SUN) at cahps1@westat.com.

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update



Update on Hospital CAHPS (H-CAHPS)

As part of its Hospital Quality Initiative, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) plans to implement a voluntary survey to gather and report information on patients' experiences with hospital care. To that end, CMS asked AHRQ to develop a CAHPS survey for hospitals; this survey is commonly referred to as **Hospital CAHPS (H-CAHPS)** or the **CAHPS Hospital Survey**.

In developing this survey, AHRQ has worked closely with the National Voluntary Hospital Reporting Initiative, which was launched by the American Hospital Association, the Federation of American Hospitals, and the Association of American Medical Colleges. This Initiative is designed to provide consumers with understandable and useful information on the quality of hospital care based on clinical measures as well as patient perception measures that will be drawn from the Hospital CAHPS Survey.

Supporters of the Initiative include:

- AHRQ
- CMS
- National Quality Forum
- Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations

- American Medical Association
- Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project
- AFL-CIO
- AARP

Formal implementation of the CAHPS Hospital Survey is currently projected for early 2005.

What Has Happened So Far?

The CAHPS Team has gone through a rigorous process to create and test an evidence-based instrument and administration protocol that would meet the needs of CMS, patients, hospitals, vendors, and others. The process included:

- A call for measures
- A review of existing literature
- Cognitive interviews with consumers
- Focus groups with consumers
- Testing of the draft instrument in a three-state pilot project sponsored by CMS (the three states were Arizona, Maryland, and New York)
- Public input in response to Federal Register notices
- Multiple opportunities for stakeholder input

Current Draft Instrument

This process resulted in the current draft instrument, which is composed of 32 items. This set of items was selected based on extensive psychometric analyses and stakeholder input. The CAHPS Team's

qualitative research indicates that the domains covered by these items are the ones that consumers regard as most important; their findings were consistent with those reported in the published literature on this topic.

Specifically, there are 24 questions that cover eight domains salient to consumers:

- Nurse communication
- Nursing services
- Doctor communication
- Physical environment
- Pain control
- Communication about medicines
- Discharge information
- Overall rating of care/Recommendation of hospital to others

Eight additional items are for analysis purposes, including adjusting results for the mix of patients across hospitals.

What's Happening Now?

Having reviewed the many responses to the Federal Register notice published on December 5, 2003, CMS and AHRQ are now taking steps to address some of the key issues and concerns that have been raised.

Specifically, the agencies are inviting hospitals and vendors to become test sites for the current instrument. The purpose of this step is to access and identify ways to minimize the potential burden and disruption posed by the

current instrument. Through these test sites, researchers will formally and scientifically investigate various approaches to integrating the H-CAHPS items with existing questionnaires, as well as alternative protocols for administering the survey. To apply to become a test site, visit the CAHPS-SUN site (www.cahps-sun.org) through May 31, 2004.

What Happens Next?

Once the current round of testing is complete, the CAHPS Team will revise the instrument and the administration protocol as needed. This revision will take into account the findings from this qualitative research, as well as all the other feedback that has been received.

The next opportunity for public input will be the publication of a second Federal Register notice, which will include the revised survey and implementation procedures.

For more information, visit:

- CMS's Web site: www.cms.hhs.gov/quality/hospital
- AHRQ's Web site: www.ahrq.gov
- CAHPS-SUN Web site: www.cahps-sun.org

new products

The ECHO[®] Survey *(The CAHPS Survey of Behavioral Health Care Services)*

The ECHO (Experiences of Care and Health Outcomes) Survey has been adopted as an official CAHPS survey of patients' experiences with behavioral health care services. This survey consists of two questionnaires: one designed for managed behavioral health organizations (MBHO) and the other for managed care organizations. These instruments are expected to meet the needs of States, private purchasers, managed care organizations, and consumers for standardized, comparable information on the quality of behavioral health services.

The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) has also adopted a version of the MBHO survey as a HEDIS measure for commercial MBHOs.

To learn more about the ECHO survey, visit: <http://www.cahps-sun.org/Products/ECHO/ECHOIntro.asp>.

The CAHPS Group Practice Survey (G-CAHPS)

The CAHPS Group Practice Survey (G-CAHPS) is now available for organizations seeking information on patients' experiences with medical groups and clinicians. This survey reflects a convergence of a survey instrument developed by the CAHPS Team with a questionnaire developed and used by the Pacific Business Group on Health (i.e., the Consumer Assessment Survey). It also represents an important step towards the development of a suite of instruments that cover the spectrum of ambulatory care (see the following discussion of Ambulatory CAHPS).

The Group Practice Survey is intended to support medical groups in their efforts to assess performance and improve the quality of care they deliver to patients. The results are also designed to be publicly reported so that consumers are better equipped to make informed decisions when choosing a medical group.

To learn more about the G-CAHPS survey, visit: www.cahps-sun.org/Products/GCAHPS/GCAHPSIntro.asp.

work-in-progress

The Development of Ambulatory CAHPS (A-CAHPS)

In 2002 and 2003, the CAHPS II Consortium conducted extensive market research to identify and assess the needs and concerns of users and other stakeholders vis-à-vis the CAHPS Health Plan Survey and related products. As a result of this research, the Consortium is currently focusing its work on determining how best to assess patients' experiences with ambulatory care at different levels of the health care system: i.e., not only at the health plan level, but also at the level of medical groups, sites of care, and individual clinicians. This effort is referred to as **Ambulatory CAHPS (A-CAHPS)**.

Current Status and Plans

A-CAHPS is currently in the developmental stages. The initial focus includes:

- Refreshing the existing instruments for commercial and Medicaid health plans, including a HEDIS version;
- Developing a set of items for PPOs; and
- Refining instruments for assessing experiences at the level of individual clinicians and group practices (i.e., G-CAHPS).

Field testing of the health plan instruments is slated to take place this summer.

For more information and updates on the progress of this initiative, visit the SUN Web site: www.cahps-sun.org/Products/A-CAHPS/ACAHPStntro.asp.

Objectives

The goal of A-CAHPS is to develop a suite of interrelated survey products that will enable users to customize questionnaires to fit their markets and meet their information needs, while still generating information that can be compared across health care organizations and across markets.

new resources

New Comprehensive CAHPS-SUN Web Site

The SUN has redesigned its Web site (www.cahps-sun.org) to offer easy access to:

- An overview of the CAHPS program;
- Information on CAHPS products, including those still in development;
- Comprehensive guidance to support the efforts of organizations that are planning and implementing CAHPS survey projects; and
- CAHPS Survey and Reporting Kits for all available survey products. Each Kit includes the specified survey instruments, supplemental item sets, sampling protocols, instructions for analyzing results, analysis programs, and related technical materials.

The site also offers the following features:

- **Events:** Find out when and where you can learn more about CAHPS at upcoming conferences, meetings, and workshops. These events are either sponsored by the SUN or feature speakers from the CAHPS Consortium.
- **Publications:** Check out recent articles published by the members of the CAHPS Consortium. This section of the site also provides links to other documents produced by the Consortium, including materials specifically for CAHPS survey users.

The CAHPS Improvement Guide

The CAHPS Improvement Guide: Practical Strategies for Improving the Patient Care Experience is a critical resource for health plans and medical groups that want to improve their performance in the areas measured by the CAHPS Health Plan Survey 3.0.

This guide, developed by the Harvard team under contract to CMS, discusses the factors that contribute to successful QI programs, presents strategies for analyzing the data to identify specific strengths and weaknesses, and reviews how CAHPS information fits into the QI process. It then presents detailed summaries of over 20 ideas for improving patients' experiences, organized into five sections that correspond to topics covered by the CAHPS Health Plan Survey:

The Guide also provides descriptions of many resources and tools related to the quality improvement process and the strategies for improving CAHPS scores.

To learn more about *The CAHPS Improvement Guide* or to download a copy, visit:
www.cahpssun.org/References/CAHPSImprovementGuide.asp

Quality of Care for Children with Special Health Care Needs

In collaboration with AHRQ, the National CAHPS Benchmarking Database (NCBD) has just released a new Fact Sheet called *Quality of Care for Children with Special Health Care Needs: Medicaid Findings from the CAHPS Child Survey*. This Fact Sheet provides a snapshot of the experiences of children with and without special health care needs who receive coverage through ten State Medicaid programs.

For a copy of the Fact Sheet, visit:
www.cahps-sun.org/WhatsNew/cshcn_fact_sheet.pdf.

Please check the Events page on the SUN site for updated information:
www.cahps-sun.org/Events/EducationalEvents.asp.

to do's

Mark Your Calendars

9th User Group Meeting

December 2-3, 2004 Waterfront Marriott in Baltimore, Maryland

Come to the User Group Meeting to hear about new CAHPS products and resources, learn how to use survey results to improve quality of care and to educate consumers and patients, and better understand how changes to existing surveys may affect you. This meeting is a great opportunity to question the CAHPS Consortium and other experts and exchange ideas and practical solutions with your peers.

Watch for a formal invitation this summer, and check the CAHPS-SUN Web site for updated information.

Upcoming Workshops

The SUN is also planning a series of workshops in 2004. Proposed topics include:

- An Introduction to Ambulatory CAHPS
- How to Use CAHPS Surveys to Improve Patients' Experiences with Care
- How to Use CAHPS Surveys for Quality Monitoring, Contracting, and Pay-for-Performance Initiatives
- How to Communicate Survey Results: An Update on Effective Reporting Techniques

To All Users: Help Us Update Your Profile

The CAHPS Survey Users Network (SUN) is currently updating its list of survey sponsors, which includes descriptions of projects.

These descriptions help us anticipate your needs for technical assistance and enable you to identify and network with peers that are experienced with CAHPS surveys.

Please email us at cahps1@westat.com with your contact information and a very brief description of your activities (i.e., how you used a CAHPS survey in 2003 or your plans for 2004). Someone from the CAHPS SUN will follow-up with you for more details.

in our next issue

A Status Report on the CAHPS
End Stage Renal Disease Survey

A New Phase for the CAHPS
Nursing Home Survey

Update on Hospital CAHPS

News from NCBD

comments or questions?

The CAHPS Survey Users Network (SUN)
welcomes your comments and questions.

Please contact us:

By email: cahps1@westat.com

By phone: 1-800-492-9261